FBI Says Weapons Not Registered

Weapons Collector Faces New Charges

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The FBI filed 18 new charges of weapons violations yesterday against Eugene S. Burcher, a Marine reserve lieutenant colonel and $31,000-a-year federal noise abatement official whose massive arsenal of weapons and ammunition was seized by the FBI last week.

The new complaint charges Burcher, who by his mother's account first became interested in weapons when he retrieved spent shells from the firing range at the Quantico Marine Base as a 12-year-old, with illegal possession of a variety of unregistered fully automatic guns and so-called "destructive devices."

The weapons, including two AK-47 Russian atutomatic assault rifles, five British Sten guns and an antitank rocket launcher, were confiscated by the FBI from Burcher's mother's home in Fredericksburg, Va.

In all, FBI agents said they seized about 200 automatic and semiautomatic weapons, more than 300 cases of ammunition, silencers, hundreds of pounds of gunpowder and military uniforms at his mother's home and his own $60,000 house at 603 Beverley Dr., Alexandria.

Burcher, 43, was arrested Thursday as he allegedly tried to withdraw weaponry from the Little Creek Naval Amphibious Base in Norfolk. Burcher was wearing a Marine uniform with aviator and paratrooper insignia at the time of his arrest, the FBI said.

The confiscated weapons are apparently sufficient to outfit an Army company, but investigators, neighbors and coworkers say they are baffled at the reason for the large gun collection and what, if anything, he planned to do with the weapons and ammunition.

"We're still guessing," said U.S. Attorney Brian P. Gettings. "I just haven't any answer—not even informed speculation.

Eugene F. Wyszpolski, a subordinate of Burcher's at the Environmental Protection Agency's noise abatement division, said Burcher had talked occasionally about his gun collection, but had not said anything about its extent or the ammunition and military clothing he had collected.

"I knew he had a collection for two purposes," said Wyszpolski. "One, he liked guns and, second, he thought

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New Charges Filed Against Gun Collector

BURCHER, From C1

it would be a good investment —to keep guns and sell them at a future date, maybe in 10 or 20 years."

Burcher's mother, Helen S. Burcher, said she didn't realize the number of weapons her son had stored in her attic. "I think he just had them to keep them from being in the hands of someone who would do something bad with them," she said, adding that her son never looked at the weapons he had stored in her attic.

T. Brooke Howard, Burcher's attorney, said his client told him by telephone from a Norfolk jail where he is being held on $25,000 bond that "he's always been an avid gun collector. He's done a pretty good job."

Burcher's arrest shocked both his neighbors and his coworkers. They variously described him as a family man concerned about the education of his two sons, 5 and 7; a meticulous home owner who loved to care for the numerous azalea bushes in his yard along quiet, tree-shaded Beverley Drive; a responsible, punctual and capable federal worker with a GS-15 rating, and a "gung-ho Marine" who has for several years attended volunteer training meetings at Andrews Air Force Base and, more recently, in Fredericksburg.

"He was a good loyal employee," said one of Burcher's superiors, Kirke Harper.

By virtually all accounts, Burcher was extremely fascinated by guns.

Another superior, Rudolph Marrazzo, said Burcher took some of his vacation time to go hunting, for deer or game birds like quail and dove. His mother said, however, that he had stopped hunting because his wife didn't approve.

His mother said Burcher would visit the Quantico base as a boy and officers, including the late Lt. Gen. Louis E. Woods, a Marine aviator who helped direct operations against the Japanese at Guadalcanal, let him pick up the shells on the firing range.

Gradually, she said, he simply started collecting guns. But no one knew how many until a suspicious officer at Little Creek last Thursday questioned his authority to withdraw weapons and he subsequently was charged with embezzling four cases of ammunition last November. Then the FBI searched—with the Burcher's permission, the agency said—the Alexandria and Fredericksburg homes.

"It's beyond my comprehension," said a neighbor, Walter L. Wolff. "I hadn't the slightest idea that he even had a BB gun."